

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 OMB-01 TRSE-00 SNM-02 EB-07 AS-01 /066 W
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R 130947Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3804
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMCONSUL MANDALAY
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
CINCPAC

CONFIDENTIAL RANGOON 2028

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS, SNAR, BM
SUBJ: BURMESE THWART COMMUNIST OFFENSIVE

1. THE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED RANGOON NEWSPAPERS ON JULY 12 PUBLISHED AN ACCOUNT OF THE BURMA ARMY'S SUCCESSFUL COUNTER-OFFENSIVE BETWEEN FEBRUARY AND JUNE AGAINST BURMA COMMUNIST PARTY (BCP) INSURGENTS ATTEMPTING TO ESTABLISH THEMSELVES IN NEW BASE AREAS IN THE SHAN STATE WEST OF THE SALWEEN RIVER AND SOUTH OF THE TAUNGGYI-KENG TUNG ROAD. THE TEXT, ALONG WITH AN ACCOMPANYING MAP, IS BEING POUCED TO DEPARTMENT (EA/TB). OTHER INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO US INDICATES THAT THE PRESS ACCOUNT IS GENERALLY ACCURATE.

2. BEGINNING EARLY THIS YEAR, BCP FORCES MOVED OUT OF THEIR LONG-TIME BASE AREA ALONG THE CHINA BORDER EAST OF THE SALWEEN, WITH THE APPARENT INTENTION OF EXPANDING THEIR AREA OF CONTROL FURTHER WEST AND SOUTH INTO THE SHAN STATE, FIRMING UP CONNECTIONS WITH THEIR NACHIN INDEPENDENCE

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ARMY (KIA) AND SHAN STATE ARMY (SSA) ALLIES, AND CUTTING THE ROAD BETWEEN TAUNGGYI AND KENG TUNG. THE BURMESE ESTIMATE THAT APPROXIMATELY 2200 BCP TROOPS WERE ENGAGED IN THE OFFENSIVE. IF THE BCP EFFORTS HAD SUCCEEDED, ITS TERRITORIAL, POPULATION, AND ECONOMIC BASE (INCLUDING OPIUM) WOULD HAVE BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY EXPANDED, AND GUB FORCES AND POPULATION CENTERS IN THE EASTERN SHAN STATE

WOULD HAVE BEEN INCREASINGLY ISOLATED AND CUT OFF FROM LAND RESUPPLY.

3. ELEMENTS OF THE BURMA ARMY'S 77TH AND 88TH LIGHT INFANTRY DIVISIONS, WITH BURMA AIR FORCE SUPPORT, WERE ENGAGED AGAINST THE INSURGENTS BEGINNING IN FEBRUARY. BY THE END OF JUNE, THE OFFENSIVE WAS ESSENTIALLY CRUSHED, AND BCP FORCES HAD WITHDRAWN BACK TO THEIR TRADITIONAL BASE AREA. THE OPPOSING FORCES FOUGHT 43 "MAJOR" CLASHES, MANY OF THEM INVOLVING HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT, AND 51 LESSER ENGAGEMENTS. THE BURMA ARMY COUNTED 275 ENEMY BODIES KILLED IN ACTION AND ESTIMATED A TOTAL OF MORE THAN 500 ENEMY DEAD. BURMA ARMY CASUALTIES WERE 130 KILLED AND 142 WOUNDED.

4. COMMENT: THE BURMESE ARMED FORCES HAVE ONCE AGAIN DEMONSTRATED THAT THEY ARE CAPABLE OF CONTAINING (THOUGH NOT NECESSARILY ELIMINATING) THEIR MOST FORMIDABLE INSURGENT THREAT. THEY HAVE DONE SO, MOREOVER, WITH OBSOLETE EQUIPMENT AND INADEQUATE SUPPLIES, AND WHILE AT THE SAME TIME DEVOTING MAJOR RESOURCES AND ATTENTION TO LESSER INSURGENT ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE SHAN UNITED ARMY (SUA). THIS IS A MOST ENCOURAGING INDICATION OF BURMESE DETERMINATION AND ABILITY TO CONTINUE TO DEAL EFFECTIVELY WITH THE VARIOUS "MULTI-COLORED" INSURGENTS, MOST OF WHOM ARE ALSO NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS. WITH PERSISTENCE, LUCK, AND SOME OUTSIDE HELP WITH EQUIPMENT,

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THE BURMESE MAY BE ABLE TO MOVE BEYOND CONTAINMENT TOWARD ELIMINATION OF THE LONGSTANDING SHAN STATE INSURGENCY PROBLEM.

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